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# Seventeenth-Century Perceptions of the Henrician Reformation in Print Culture

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**Seventeenth-Century Perceptions of the Henrician Reformation in Print Culture**

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Honors Thesis

Eastern Illinois University - History Department

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Dr. Newton Key, Advisor

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# Introduction

In 1533, Henry VIII's desire for a male heir led to a break with Rome, and the establishment of a Church of England. The changes in the 1630s, not merely replacing the pope with the English monarch as head of the Church, but also distributing the Bible in English of the Monasteries, became known as the Henrician Reformation. Henry calmed down the pace of reform during the last phase of his reign from 1539. Many of the evangelicals he had once supported were now being persecuted, and the Church of England was returning to many Catholic practices. Yet, Henry had no intention of reconciling with Rome, and made sure that his young son, the male heir he so wanted, was surrounded by Protestant advisors. After Henry's death, those advisors directed Edward VI to initiate further Protestant reform. Edward died young, though, and his sister Mary I became queen. Mary, a Catholic, brought England back to Rome for a number of years during a Counter Reformation. She too did not live long and her sister Elizabeth I took the throne. Elizabeth, the last Tudor, attempted to reconcile the divisions between Catholicism and Protestantism. By Elizabeth's death in 1603, England was a very Protestant and anti-Catholic country.<sup>1</sup> This thesis examines how post-1603, Stuart England remembered and assessed Henry VIII and the beginning of the Reformation (or, as this brief background suggests, Reformations).

King Henry VIII fascinated the next century was represented numerous times in seventeenth-century print—both in high and low literature. Several learned and lengthy histories were written about Henry VIII and the events of his reign, such as Edward, Lord Herbert of Cherbury's *The Life and Raigne of King Henry the Eighth* (1649) and Gilbert Burnet's *The History of the Reformation of the Church of England* (1681). Henry was also present in much

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Bucholz and Newton Key, *Early Modern England, 1485-1714* (Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009). 32-157.

low literature too. He was a popular character in the many chapbooks published during the period. While he was absent from seventeenth-century ballads, events of his reign were quite popular. Seventeenth-century images in printed materials also often featured Henry VIII. These printed materials and images provide an idea of what the seventeenth century thought of the king and the Henrician Reformation. This thesis attempts to show how history can be reshaped by times in all forms of print culture.

The seventeenth century witnessed a rise in print culture and literacy. Historians usually can only measure literacy by noting those who are able to write their own name a “literate,” and those who can only make a mark a “illiterate.”<sup>2</sup> Yet some who could not sign could read. Adam Fox argues a significant portion of the population in England was able to read printed materials:

Recent scholarship has suggested the likely existence of a significant popular readership in England for at least the sixteenth century. Both quantitative calculations based upon signatures and qualitative testimony derived from anecdotal sources indicate that some degree of literacy was not uncommon relatively far down the social order by this time.<sup>3</sup>

Individuals were reading more than they ever had; they craved for material.

Literacy rates depended directly on economic class; the higher on the economic ladder an individual was, the more likely they were able to read.<sup>4</sup> Those in the upper classes tended to read high literature, while the common people tended to read low literature. The difference in audience causes these two types of print to be extremely different and thus present extremely different views of Henry VIII. This paper is specifically looking at these different types of sources to see how the Henrician Reformation (specifically the break from Rome, dissolution of the monasteries, the legalization of the Bible, and the burning of Anne Askew) and the king were

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<sup>2</sup> Barry Reay, *Popular Cultures in England, 1550-1750* (London & New York: Longman, 1998), 39.

<sup>3</sup> Adam Fox, “Popular Verses and Their Readership in the Early Seventeenth Century,” in eds. James Raven, Helen Small, and Naomi Tadmor’s *The Practice and Representation of Reading in England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 125.

<sup>4</sup> Reay, 40.

portrayed in these different types of print and images. These images are specifically examined because they provide an insight to the elite and popular cultures of the seventeenth century. It will then discuss what the reasoning for those portrayals may have been.

## Henry VIII in High Literature (Histories)

High literature—expensive folios of history—arguably most shaped seventeenth-century views of Henry VIII’s reign and the Henrician Reformation. A few long histories printed as folios, provided well-researched accounts of Henry’s life and reign. These accounts looked into the main events and attempted to sort the pieces together. These histories became very popular as a result of the Renaissance and the rise in history as a discipline, but they are not always reliable and should be closely examined. While histories are great sources for facts, outside influences sometimes forced the historian to provide selective information. Edward, Lord Herbert of Cherbury’s *The Life and Raigne of King Henry the Eighth* and Gilbert Burnet’s *The History of the Reformation of the Church of England* provide extensive portraits of Henry VIII and his reformation, but they also provide conflicting viewpoints. This chapter focuses on their treatment of a few events to show conflicting views: the break from Rome, the dissolution of the monasteries, and the burning of Anne Askew.

The seventeenth century witnessed a rise in historical knowledge. The Renaissance, which resulted in an increase in education, caused individuals to desire knowledge, and history was another form of knowledge. Prior to the seventeenth century, history had been seen by many as a branch of literature.<sup>5</sup> Although the era saw an increasing separation between literature and history, the word “history” was still often interchangeable with “narrative” and “story.”<sup>6</sup> Throughout the century, historians aimed to not only delight readers, but also to instruct and to educate. F. Smith Fussner argues in *The Historical Revolution* there were five main reasons for this growing separation between literature and history: new strength of literature in academia; the

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<sup>5</sup> F. Smith Fussner, *The Historical Revolution: English Historical Writing and Thought 1580-1640* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962), 46.

<sup>6</sup> Barbara J. Shapiro, *A Culture of Fact: England, 1550-1720* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2000), 34.



increasing interest in history; the appearance of scholarly monographs, reference works, and reliable narratives; censorship, which discouraged original and independent views; and the desire for discovery in learning.<sup>7</sup>

If many historians began to be associated with universities, universities themselves were overwhelmingly for divinity studies.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, it is unsurprising to find many of these historians were clergy. Also, historians primarily came from the upper classes who had been educated at universities. Those in lower classes found it difficult to become a credible history writer not only because of their lack of writing and reading skills, but also their lack of education and finances. Historians often purchased their own primary source material. In any case, they had to know and visit the private muniments rooms of the elite, because there was not much of a sense of a national archive, and most source materials was privately owned.<sup>9</sup> Some materials could be found in university libraries, which had grown in size between the Protestant Reformation and the civil wars. The government also gave historians access to public records in their treasuries at Westminster and the Tower of London.<sup>10</sup> Seventeenth-century historians, who were delighted to have access to public records, trusted the government documents much more than twenty-first-century historians may have.<sup>11</sup>

Access to government materials came with a price. Instead of writing what they wanted, historians were subject to scrutiny from the government or private owners of documents. As a result, historians were often times forced to shape their histories in order to please their sponsor. For example, in 1590, Dr. Giles Fletcher wrote to Lord Burghley requesting help and patronage in writing a history of Queen Elizabeth and her reign. In order to gain Burghley's support,

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<sup>7</sup> Fussner, 47-48.

<sup>8</sup> Fussner, 37.

<sup>9</sup> Fussner, 36.

<sup>10</sup> Fussner, 35.

<sup>11</sup> Fussner, 32.

Fletcher informed him that not only would he allow Burghley to choose which documents he could receive and correct anything he wrote, but Fletcher would also defend Queen Elizabeth's legitimacy as queen.<sup>12</sup> He would defend the marriage of King Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn. Some historians were willing to write narratives that might not be completely accurate in order to gain information.

Historians did not have to worry only about impressing and pleasing their sponsors, though. The government (who sometimes was a sponsor as well) always needed to be pleased with the historian's work. Politics and historical research formed a very close relationship during the seventeenth century.<sup>13</sup> Not only did both the government and historians think that history often repeated itself, they also agreed that studying past events showed how people acted. Therefore, the government monitored the histories being published in seventeenth-century England. The government tried to force historians to submit their manuscripts to the proper authorities before publication.<sup>14</sup> Fussner argues, "[Historians] were not free to link the past and the present in any way they saw fit. There was an official policy 'line' on certain subjects, and writers were expected to hew to it."<sup>15</sup> Historians who did not follow these policies often found themselves in very difficult situations, such as John Hayward. In 1599, Hayward published the *First Part of the Life and Reign of Henry IV*, but did not follow government censorship laws and was accused of relating past events to the present.<sup>16</sup> The government imprisoned Hayward

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<sup>12</sup> Fussner, 41.

<sup>13</sup> Fussner, 49.

<sup>14</sup> Fussner writes, "According to a regulation of 1599 histories were to be licensed by the privy council; in 1637 it was proposed that one of the two principal secretaries of state be made responsible for licensing works on history and statecraft. Other fields, such as law, heraldry, and religion were each to be made subject to an appropriate authority after 1637, although the King remained the fountainhead of all authority in matters of licensing, as in the days of Henry VIII." Pg. 48

Fussner, 48.

<sup>15</sup> Fussner, 48.

<sup>16</sup> Fussner, 49.

between 1599 and 1601 because the attorney general believed Hayward had made several analogies between Queen Elizabeth I and King Richard II, who had been deposed in 1377, and he had the misfortune to publish his work during the rise of the Earl of Essex, who eventually led a still-born rebellion.<sup>17</sup> The government prosecuted historians for real or imaginary historical slanders.

Fear of censorship caused a dilemma for historians. History's purpose was, and still is, to find the truth. If a historian came across information that was truthful but went against what the government wanted published, historians had to make a tough decision: publish falsities or publish truth. Censorship especially hurt the study of recent history, such as Tudor history.<sup>18</sup> Because of this, twenty-first-century historians must remember some seventeenth-century histories of the Tudor era may not be completely accurate.

Both Edward, Lord Herbert of Cherbury and Gilbert Burnet came out of the seventeenth-century historical revolution. Both men were highly educated and from the upper class (and Gilbert, later Bishop Burnet, was a clergyman), and both wrote long, popular histories. Both men also wrote substantial histories about Henry VIII's life and reign. Lord Herbert's *The Life and Raigne of King Henry the Eighth* (published in 1649) is an extensive history of Henry VIII's life. Burnet's *The History of the Reformation of the Church of England* (published in 1681) tells the story of the whole English Reformation, with part one focusing on Henry's role. These works greatly influenced the legacy of Henry VIII.

Both authors recognized the difficulty of writing a history about Henry VIII and his reign. At the beginning of *The Life and Raigne of King Henry the Eighth*, Lord Herbert writes, "It is not ea[s]ie to write that Princes Hi[s]tory, of whom no one thing may con[s]tantly be

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<sup>17</sup> Fussner, 39.

<sup>18</sup> Fussner, 40.

affirmed.”<sup>19</sup> Lord Herbert also expresses concern for his primary sources. After discussing a letter supposedly from Anne Boleyn to Henry VIII prior to her death, Burnet expresses concern for the validity of the source and informs the audience that he does not necessarily believe the letter was actually written by Anne Boleyn.<sup>20</sup>

Lord Herbert’s biography of Henry VIII contains nearly 600 pages of information. It begins with Henry’s birth and ends with his death. Throughout the book, Cherbury made sure to praise Henry immensely. This may have been as a result of the censorship laws in place during the seventeenth century or because the work had been commissioned by Charles I.<sup>21</sup> Even though Henry had been dead for 102 years when Cherbury published his work, it was still necessary for authors to sing praises of monarchs; he devoted the first two pages alone, before even starting the actual biography, praising Henry VIII and his character.<sup>22</sup> Cherbury wrote about all aspects of Henry’s reign, not just the events related to the Reformation.

Herbert describes Henry VIII’s divorce from Katherine of Aragon as the main reason for the break with Rome. Lord Herbert recognized Henry wanted to divorce Katherine in order to marry Anne Boleyn, but he cited the main example for divorce as the illegitimacy of Katherine and Henry’s marriage.<sup>23</sup> Herbert also went into great detail about Cardinal Thomas Wolsey’s, the archbishop of York and Henry’s main advisor, failure in securing a divorce and how he

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<sup>19</sup> Edward, Lord Herbert of Cherbury, *The Life and Raigne of King Henry the Eighth* (London, 1649), 1.

<sup>20</sup> Herbert, 384.

<sup>21</sup> David A. Pailin, ‘Herbert, Edward, first Baron Herbert of Cherbury and first Baron Herbert of Castle Island (1582?–1648)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2009 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/13020>, accessed 23 April 2013]

<sup>22</sup> Herbert, 1-2.

<sup>23</sup> Henry argued that he and Katherine were never really married because Katherine had been previously married to his older, and dead, brother, Arthur. Following Arthur’s death, Katherine asserted the marriage had never been consummated, so the Pope granted Henry and Katherine a papal dispensation to marry despite Leviticus stating a brother shall not take his brother’s wife. When Henry wanted to divorce Katherine, he claimed that this papal dispensation was invalid and their marriage had always been a sin.

Herbert, 216.

refused to help.<sup>24</sup> Cherbury may have put such an emphasis on Wolsey's failure because he was a Catholic archbishop—an extremely important figure in the Roman Catholic hierarchy. Lord Herbert expresses great disdain for the Catholic Church and its hierarchy. He writes of the pope's carelessness in losing England: "For, though the Pope had reason to feare, left hee should lose his antient Jurisdiction adhearing too much to that side, hee might offend the Emperour so farre, as to hazard the losse of his own."<sup>25</sup> The pope was more interested in saving himself than standing for what was right, giving Henry just cause to rid his kingdom of papal authority. Lord Herbert also hinted at papal corruption and wrote about how the pope offered canonization to English bishops who defied Henry's authority.<sup>26</sup> The author portrayed Henry as being completely right in "shak[ing] off the Romish yolk."<sup>27</sup>

The dissolution of the monasteries, which occurred between 1536 and 1539, did not receive much attention from Herbert. He mentioned the dissolution of the smaller monasteries in 1536 saying, "The Abbey-lands were scattered and distribute into so many hands, since Cromwell forgot not to tell his King, that the more had interest in them, the more they would be irrevocable."<sup>28</sup> He argued Henry VIII did not profit much from this dissolution of the small monasteries because of Cromwell's bad advising. He also mentioned the dissolution of the larger monasteries in 1539. This extremely important event only received a paragraph, though. Lord Herbert only said that Henry VIII gained the lands. It is extremely interesting that such a monumental event in Henry's reign would receive so little attention.

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<sup>24</sup> Herbert, 216.

<sup>25</sup> Original spelling kept, but orthography (long s, v) modernized, and italics and all caps usually ignored.

Herbert, 223.

<sup>26</sup> Herbert, 224.

<sup>27</sup> Herbert, 303.

<sup>28</sup> Herbert, 377.

Lord Herbert also did not associate Henry with the burning of heretics, including Anne Askew. Herbert wrote very little about Anne Askew, only stating she was a Protestant burned for expressing her views. He also made it seem like she was killed not for being a Protestant, but instead for being an argumentative woman.<sup>29</sup> Herbert also explained how the king complained about Catherine Parr's, his current wife, debating. Herbert implied Henry was less concerned with Protestantism and more concerned with woman debating.

Burnet's *The History of the Reformation of the Church of England* differed from Lord Herbert's *The Life and Raigne of King Henry the Eighth* in that it is not a biography, but an account of the events related to the Reformation. Burnet went into extensive detail about the Henrician Reformation in the first part of the history subtitled *Progress Made in It During the Reign of King Henry the VIII*. Burnet's extensive history began with the Wars of the Roses prior to Henry's reign and ended with Elizabeth I's death. Burnet discusses every detail of the Reformation. Because his book examined solely the religious aspects of Henry's reign, it had a great deal more detail than Lord Herbert's biography. The whole work was nearly 2,000 pages! It provided information and insight into the Henrician Reformation that is still used by historians today.

Like Lord Herbert, Burnet focuses on Henry's divorce from Katherine of Aragon as the main reason for the break from Rome. Unlike Herbert, Burnet chooses not to go into great detail about the marriage and divorce. Instead, he mentions the highlights most people know: Henry wanted a divorce on the grounds that his marriage to Katherine of Aragon was illegitimate and Henry wanted to marry Anne Boleyn. Instead, he focuses on arguments made by many people involved in the debate, both in England and on the continent. The lack of emphasis on the divorce between Katherine and Henry shows Burnet was more focused on the religious aspect of

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<sup>29</sup> Lord Herbert, 317.

the break rather than the political aspect. Burnet concluded while Henry VIII had many faults, he was still a good prince and the Reformation could not have been achieved without him because he was God's instrument. The break from Rome was not simply a political move, but was instead an act of God.<sup>30</sup>

Burnet explains and defends Henry VIII's decision to dissolve the monasteries extensively. He begins with the original reasons for the dissolution of the monasteries. Prior to the dissolution of small monasteries in 1536 and large monasteries in 1539, Cardinal Wolsey had attempted to receive permission from Rome to dissolve some of the monasteries in England. Burnet writes, "He intended to visit all the Monasteries of England, that is discovering their corruptions, he might better justify the design he had to suppress most of them, and convert them to into Bishopricks, Cathedrals, Collegiate Churches and Colledges."<sup>31</sup> This dissolution in the 1520s led to the more wide-spread dissolution of the monasteries following Henry's break from Rome. Burnet goes into great detail about the dissolution of the smaller monasteries. He states the smaller monasteries deserved to be dissolved because of corrupt practices that had gone unchecked for hundreds of years:

That small Religious Houses under the number of twelve persons, had been long and notoriously guilty of vicious and abominable Living; and did much consume and waste their Churches Lands, and other things belonging to them; and that for above two hundred years, there had been many Visitations for reforming these Abuses, but with no success; their vicious living encreasing daily.<sup>32</sup>

The government forced monks to move to larger monasteries and the king was given their lands. Burnet states the dissolution of the monasteries was necessary because the monks living in these

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<sup>30</sup> Martin Greig, 'Burnet, Gilbert (1643–1715)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/4061>, accessed 23 April 2013].

<sup>31</sup> Gilbert Burnet, *The History of the Reformation of the Church of England*, (London, 1681), 20.

<sup>32</sup> Burnet, 193.

opulent buildings were small in numbers and should have lived in poverty to begin with.<sup>33</sup> Three years later, the even grander larger monasteries would be dissolved as well. Burnet devoted nearly five pages to discussing the dissolution of the larger monasteries. He discussed not only the actual process of dissolving the monasteries, but also the legislature that went into dissolving it. He also stated the dissolution of the monasteries was for the king's profit and the destruction of superstition.<sup>34</sup> Burnet's description of the dissolution of the monasteries includes detailed information, which allows readers a much better idea of the process and reasoning behind the dissolution.

Burnet also addressed the Anne Askew burning in his book. He gave a biography of Anne and went into great detail about her death. Like Cherbury's description, Burnet focused less on the fact that Askew was a Protestant heretic and more on the fact that she was a woman speaking out of context.<sup>35</sup> He also blamed the bishops, Lord Chancellor, and others for Anne's destruction rather than Henry VIII. Burnet went so far as to say, "When the King heard this [Anne's torture and execution], he blamed the Lord Chancellor for his Cruelty, and excused the Lieutenant of the Tower."<sup>36</sup> Burnet, unlike many other sources, relates Henry to Anne's burning. This may have been because Burnet saw Henry as a man of many faults.<sup>37</sup> But even so, Burnet has Henry making up for his faults and attempting to fix them.

Edward, Lord Herbert of Cherbury and Gilbert Burnet present similar visions of Henry VIII and the Henrician Reformation. Both authors put a great deal of emphasis on Henry's divorce from Katherine of Aragon as the main reason for the break from Rome, but Burnet also focuses on the religious aspect of the break. Lord Herbert and Burnet both discuss the

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<sup>33</sup> Burnet, 193.

<sup>34</sup> Burnet, 260.

<sup>35</sup> Burnet, 341.

<sup>36</sup> Burnet, 342.

<sup>37</sup> Greig.



dissolution of the monasteries in 1536 and 1539, but Herbert does not talk a great deal about them. The dissolution of the monasteries is one of the most well-known events of the Henrician Reformation, so it does not make much sense by Herbert would decide not to include much about it. Both authors also include a section on Anne Askew, which does associate her with Henry's reign (something many other sources do not), but both authors make it seem like Anne was killed not because of her Protestant beliefs. Instead, she was killed because she was a woman who spoke her mind and argued for her beliefs.

Seventeenth-century histories provide modern day historians with a good idea of what people were remembering about the Henrician Reformation over 100 years after Henry VIII's death. Edward, Lord Herbert of Cherbury's *The Life and Raeign of King Henry the Eighth* and Gilbert Burnet's *The History of the Reformation of the Church of England* provide insight into the views of Henry VIII expressed in high literature. While these histories include a great deal of research and facts, it is also important to remember that they cannot always be taken at face value. Many of the historians were selective in which points of history to discuss as a result of censorship laws and patrons that then spread on to other forms of print in the time.

## The King and the Cobbler: Henry VIII in the Low Literature of Abridgements, Ballads, and Chapbooks

The English people of the seventeenth century read about and commented upon the age of Henry VIII through cheap octavo and duodecimo chapbooks and broadsides, as well as long expensive folios. While it is somewhat an exaggeration, it is generally true that the upper classes read the expensive tomes, while the lower classes read the cheaper literature.<sup>38</sup> Those who wanted access to the long histories would often buy abridgements, or shortened copies of the long histories. While these abridgements were still often quite long, they were shortened and cheaply made, which made them accessible to a larger audience. Abridgements and other forms of low literature, such as ballads and chapbooks, were the most popular types of literature during this time. Michael McKeon argues, “The literary sphere is subdivided into its high ‘private’ and its low ‘public’ subspheres.”<sup>39</sup> A number of these works commented upon Henry VIII, some even on the Henrician Reformation. Some relied on a stock, mythic image of the king. Each type of popular print provides an idea of how the non-elite (the general populace) remembered Henry VIII and the Henrician Reformation.

Although much of this low literature does not expressly mention the Reformation, it does give historians an idea of how the masses viewed Henry and how these views may have shaped seventeenth-century views of the Reformation. “Sophisticated literature merely provided, as it were, chapter-headings for the real story of ordinary people, whose own sub-literature of ballad-sheets and pamphlets [which includes chapbooks] provided news, diversion, inspiration, fantasy,

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<sup>38</sup> Barry Reay, *Popular Cultures in England, 1550-1750* (London and New York: Longman, 1998), 48.

<sup>39</sup> Michael McKeon, *The Secret History of Domesticity: Public, Private, and the Division of Knowledge* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 409.

and political stimulus,” states Leslie Shepard, “It is precisely because of its faults and deficiencies that it is of greater significance historically than the more polished works of sophisticated writers.”<sup>40</sup> The low culture literature played a significant role in influencing popular opinion.<sup>41</sup>

Abridgements, while cheaply printed, still have many of the characteristics of high literature. Abridgments, perhaps ironically, emphasize facts over interpretation. *The Abridgement of the History of the Reformation of the Church of England* by Gilbert Burnet, published in 1682, is a shorter version of Burnet’s larger work, though the text still covers nearly 800 pages; indeed, the section about Henry VIII covers some 317 pages.<sup>42</sup> Like its larger history counterpart, Burnet’s abridgement contains many facts about Henry’s reign. The chapter on Henry VIII starts by explaining the Tudor dynasty’s origins in the Wars of the Roses and ends with the capture of Cardinal Poole’s friends following King Henry VIII’s death. Obviously, it focuses on the religious events of the reign: the break from Rome, the dissolution/destruction of the monasteries, the legalization of the English Bible. Also, like many of the long histories, the Burnet abridgement does not address the more Catholic aspects of Henry’s reign, such as the execution of many Protestants and Henry’s earlier earning of the title of “defender of the faith” from the Pope. The facts presented are selected and shaped.

While abridgements allowed those outside the upper classes the chance to learn some factual history, the public probably gained a great deal of its history through the many ballads that were printed in the seventeenth century. Broadside ballads were sheets of verse that usually included a woodcut. Printers often used black letter (a form of Gothic type that was more easily

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<sup>40</sup> Leslie Shepard, *The History of Street Literature* (Detroit: Singing Tree Press, 1962), 13-14.

<sup>41</sup> Reay, 58.

<sup>42</sup> Gilbert Burnet, *The Abridgement of the History of the Reformation of the Church of England*, (London, 1682).

read by the lower classes) in order to accommodate all classes.<sup>43</sup> The ballads were sold by hawkers, who traveled town-to-town selling the ballads for a half-penny or penny. Ballad usually provided a tune that was either made specifically for the ballad or set to the time of a popular tune. These ballads had many different themes, including religious, political, criminal, romantic, amatory, bawdy, humorous, superstitious, moralistic, and tragic.<sup>44</sup> Ballads were a popular form of entertainment for those living in seventeenth-century England and people of all classes enjoyed them. Michael McKeon would agree that ballads are a prime example of the public low literature because people of all classes had access to them and knew of them. Even if a person could not read, they could know a ballad from hearing it on the streets by a hawker or a friend who owned a copy of the ballad.<sup>45</sup>

One event from the Henrician Reformation that became the subject of a ballad was the burning of Anne Askew. *A Ballad of Anne Askew, Intituled: I am a Woman Poore and Blind* was very popular throughout the seventeenth century. The ballad, written in a first-person narrative, tells the story of a Protestant heretic burned in Henry VIII's reign.<sup>46</sup> It includes her thoughts as she is about to be executed. Throughout the ballad, Askew condemns many of the Catholic practices, such as masses for the dead and corrupt clergy members. She explains how the Catholic practices have pushed her away from God: "In me was sown all kind of feigned seeds,/ with Popish ceremonies many a one,/ masses of requiem with other juggling deeds,/ till God's spirit out of my garden was gone."<sup>47</sup> Askew also explains how she originally put her faith

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<sup>43</sup> Angela McShane, "The Roasting of the Rump: Scatology and the Body Politic in Restoration England," *Past & Present* 177, 1 (2007): 256.

<sup>44</sup> McShane, 254-257.

<sup>45</sup> McShane, 257.

<sup>46</sup> *A Ballad of Anne Askew, Intituled: I am a Woman Poore and Blind* (London, 1624).

<sup>47</sup> *A Ballad of Anne Askew*.

in these corrupt practices: “My trust I did put in the Devil’s works,/ thinking sufficient my soul to save,/ being worse then either Jews or Turks,/ thus Christ of his merits I did deprave.”<sup>48</sup>



*A Ballad of Anne Askew, Intituled: I am a Woman Poore and Blind* by an anonymous author. Printed in 1624.

She also attacks Stephen Gardiner, bishop of Winchester, who was present at her execution, by noting how Gardiner (spelled Gardener in the ballad) attempted to corrupt her beliefs while she was in the Tower of London. She explains the many methods that he used, many non-physical, to attempt to change her beliefs: “Then this proud Gardener seeing me so blind,/ he thought on me to work his will,/ And flattered me with words so kind,/ to have me continue in my blindness still.”<sup>49</sup> Anne admits there were many points when she wanted to, and sometimes did, agree with the bishop, but she states she knew in the end that this was wrong and requested forgiveness from God. At the end of the ballad, Anne specifically warns against

<sup>48</sup> *A Ballad of Anne Askew.*

<sup>49</sup> *A Ballad of Anne Askew.*

Gardiner and people like him (Catholics) who will easily corrupt the good. *The Ballad of Anne Askew* attacks solely Bishop Gardiner and the corrupt clergy, not Henry. (This is somewhat valid, since soon after her execution, Henry would remove Gardiner from his list of executors, signaling perhaps that he had no interest in a full reconciliation to Rome after his death).<sup>50</sup> Like other examples seen throughout the seventeenth century, literature refuses to remember Henry as a negative ruler; he will not be associated with the burnings of Protestants.

Another form of popular literature, chapbooks, also provide great insight into the views of the time period related to Henry VIII and the Henrician Reformation, but they do so in a much straight-forward obvious way.

In the seventeenth century, chapbooks were one of the most popular forms of entertainment. Chapbooks are small, cheaply-made books (usually 8.5 x 14 cm in length).<sup>51</sup> Printed on cheap paper and written in black letter, chapbooks were made to be widely accessible and distributed. The stories, usually 16 or 24 pages in length, were meant to be entertaining and informative.<sup>52</sup> Chapbooks—an integral part of “street literature,” which also included ballads, broadsides, almanacs, political propaganda, and news-sheets—were primarily read by the middle classes, both upper- and lower-.<sup>53</sup> Roger Thompson argues in *Samuel Pepys’ Penny Merriments* the middle class was probably the most likely to read the chapbooks because of their increasing literacy rates and the relevant topics of the chapbooks:

It seems improbable that the poorest classes, cottagers, day-labourers—the frequent butt of chapbook humour—or unskilled workers in the towns would have had the time, ability

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<sup>50</sup> C.D.C. Armstrong, ‘Gardiner, Stephen (c. 1495x8-1555)’. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn. Jan 2008), [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/10364, accessed 23 April 2013].

<sup>51</sup> Roger Thompson, *Samuel Pepys’ Penny Merriments: Being a Collection of Chapbooks, Full of Histories, Jests, Magic, Amorous Tales of Courtship, Marriage and Infidelity, Accounts of Rogues and Fools, Together with Comments on the Times* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), 11.

<sup>52</sup> Thompson, 11.

<sup>53</sup> Thompson, 13.

or motivation to read chapbooks. Woman—another popular quarry—were similarly probably less literate than men. The most likely audience is the middle classes: the lower echelons, tradesmen, artisans, journeymen, yeomen and substantial husbandmen, for simpler jests, histories, romances and rogueries, the better educated for the subtler humour, the garlands, the satire and the complements.<sup>54</sup>

Shepard, in agreement with Thompson, states, “Pamphlets appealed chiefly to the middle classes. The language and the finer points of religious and political controversy were complex, and besides, the pamphlets were too expensive for most poor readers.”<sup>55</sup> Although the poor were not exposed a great deal to the chapbooks, the fact that the chapbooks were a favorite of the middle class shows that they were available to most of the literate population. Therefore, historians may use chapbooks—a “vivid and invaluable source of popular culture for historians”—as a way to gain insight into the minds of the everyday Englishmen in the seventeenth century.<sup>56</sup>

Chapbooks, like ballads, could be written about anything. Unlike the ballads, however, where the king almost never appeared during the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Henry VIII was actually a popular chapbook subject. He was particularly popular in a genre of chapbooks called histories, which were, in fact, often historical fiction, myths, legends, and tall tales.<sup>57</sup> Two chapbooks published during the seventeenth century, *The Pleasant and Delightful History of King Henry VIII and a Cobler* and *The Pleasant and Delightful History of King Henry VIII and the Abbot of Reading*, give representations of King Henry VIII that are not seen in any other sort of literature.<sup>58</sup> While histories and ballads may have portrayed Henry VIII as a good and just king, these chapbooks take the image of Henry to a new level. Both stories make Henry VIII almost unrecognizable to

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<sup>54</sup> Thompson, 13.

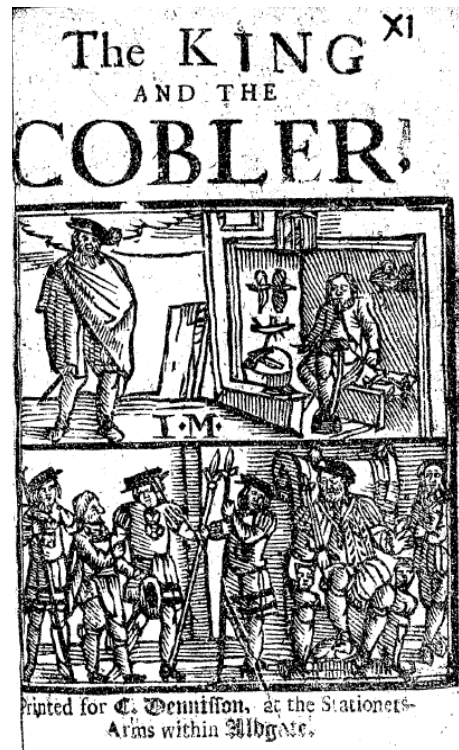
<sup>55</sup> Shepard, 26.

<sup>56</sup> Thompson, 11.

<sup>57</sup> Thompson, 15-16.

<sup>58</sup> *A Pleasant and Delightful History of King Henry VIII and a Cobler Relating How He Came Acquainted with the Cobler, and the Pleasant Humours that Happened Thereupon*, (London, 1670). *A Pleasant and Delightful History of King Henry VIII and the Abbot of Reading Declaring How the King Dined with the Abbot of Reading, and How the King Brought the Abbot to a Good Stomach*, (London, 1680).

modern audiences with his kind and friendly nature. While Lord Herbert and Burnet paint Henry in the most favorable terms, chapbooks portray him as ideal king of mythic proportions, who has the good, common sense to associate with the common people. And yet, even this portrait of Henry is complete fiction, at time the chapbook portrait resembles that found in longer, more learned texts.



*The Pleasant and Delightful History of King Henry VIII and the Cobler* published in 1670.

*The King and the Cobler* tells the story of Henry VIII's meeting with a lowly cobbler, shoe repairman. Like many other chapbooks, the story is 24 pages long—a single folio folded many times. The story starts by explaining that Henry often traveled outside his palace among the common people without being recognized. While he was out on his nightly walks, Henry would communicate with his subjects without them realizing who he was. One night, when Henry was walking, he came across the cobbler and had him fix his shoe. The two men quickly became close friends over several alcoholic beverages. As the king was leaving, he told the



cobbler to come visit him at court. All the cobbler had to do was ask for “Harry Tudor;” everyone there would know who he was. A few days later, the cobbler went to court to visit his friend Harry, but was instead sent to the king. The cobbler was greatly confused and could not accept that the king was indeed his drinking buddy. After a good laugh, the two men continued to drink together.

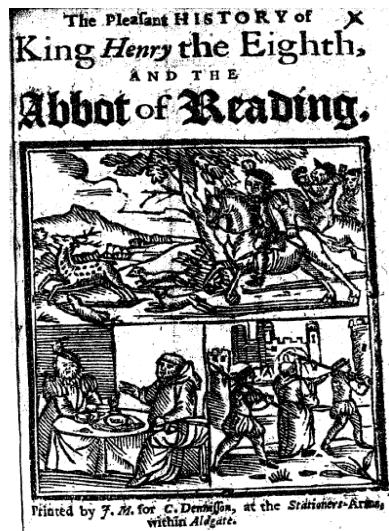
This chapbook suggests that the lower sorts viewed Henry as a good ruler, though solely in their terms. He is pleasant, jovial, and fair-minded. He is described as “honest Harry.” The more nuanced view of the Henrician Reformation is, of course, missing. What is here is an image of the friend to the honest laborer or artisan that is often seen in chapbooks. This idea is also seen in chapbooks such as *Tom Thumb, His Life and Death*.<sup>59</sup> King Arthur, an obviously mythical king, is portrayed in a similar way to Henry VIII. He also interacts and befriends the common people. What is here is an image of the friend to the honest laborer or artisan that is often seen in chapbooks.

*The Pleasant History of King Henry VIII and the Abbot of Reading*, published in 1680, gives another unrealistic story of Henry VIII’s interactions with individuals outside the court. In the story, Henry VIII becomes lost one day while he is on a hunt with court. While trying to find his way back to the group, Henry comes across an abbot, who welcomes Henry VIII to dinner. Henry VIII’s appetite and stomach for the meat he offers the king fascinates the abbot, a clergyman at the monastery of Reading (a monastery dissolved by Henry VIII). The abbot, who has been spoiled by the food for many years, does not react to it the same way Henry does—

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<sup>59</sup> *Tom Thumb, His Life and Death; Wherin is declared many marvelous Acts of Manhood, full of wonder and strange merriment: Which little Knight lived in King Arthur’s time, in the Court of Great Britain* (Edinburgh, 1682).

who, as king, *obviously* never has feasts. The abbot tells Henry he would give the king 100 pounds if he could teach him how to enjoy food in a similar fashion. The king pretends to shrug off the request, but he decides to do just that for the abbot. After leaving, Henry has the abbot arrested and put into the Tower of London. There, the guards refuse to feed the abbot anything but bread and water. When the abbot has gotten to the point where he desires to eat his own skin, Henry decides to allow the guard to give the abbot a feast, without the abbot's knowledge that the king has been in on this the entire time. Through a hole in the wall, the king watches the abbot eat his feast and enjoy the food put before him. Henry then tells the abbot that by denying the abbot's appetite for so long, he has given the abbot a stomach and appetite similar to his own. He then orders the abbot to give him the 100 pounds promised to him.



*The Pleasant and Delightful History of King Henry VIII and the Abbot of Reading.* Published in 1680.

Like *The King and the Cobbler*, this chapbook also portrays Henry VIII as a commonsense hero, although more in the guise of a trickster to the hapless Abbot. While Henry again interacts with individuals outside court without much pomp and circumstance (being incognito or in disguise seems as easy as Clark Ken donning a Superman costume for him), he is quite kind to the lower sorts, but a bit demanding and prankish against those in elite positions, like an abbot.

One might also read *Henry VIII and the Abbot of Reading* as relating to the Reformation. The church's wealth had seemingly spoiled the abbot to the point where he could not enjoy good food anymore. Henry strips the abbot of his wealth and possessions in order to set up the prank or witticism. This can obviously be compared to what happened to those in orders—abbots, monks, nuns—during the dissolution of the monasteries between 1536 and 1539. The trickster one-upmanship of the abbot definitely hints at anti-clericalism. Henry making the abbot give him 100 pounds as payment for helping him could be read as a satirical comment on the Dissolution.

The portrayals of Henry VIII in *The King and the Cobbler* and *King Henry VIII and the Abbot of Reading* both show that the popular perceptions of Henry's characteristics were shaping the way that common people viewed the history of his reign and the Reformation that took place during it.

The public low literature of the seventeenth century provides historians with a great deal of insight into how the people of this time viewed Henry VIII and the Henrician Reformation. The information included in popular print such as abridgements, ballads, and chapbooks shows that the popular view of Henry VIII was shaped by the memory of his reign presented in other forms of print. While the long histories of high literature provide historians with the facts that were being remembered about Henry VIII and the Henrician Reformation, it is the low literature, such as abridgements, ballads, and chapbooks, which provides a great insight into how the popular culture took those facts and molded public opinion.

## Lasting Images of Henrician Reformation in Stuart Era

English kings and queens have long emphasized the significance of their royal images. Historians have detailed images' expansion as a monarchical propaganda tool. The Tudors especially attempted to control royal portraiture whether in painting or engraved images during their respective reigns. A portrait or print, however, often far outlasted a monarch's life and would be used in contexts far removed from the original public relations intention. This chapter examines images of Henry VIII and his reign that suggest how images of the reign were repurposed after his death or even that of the Tudors. Henry VIII was specifically remembered after his death for certain parts of the Henrician Reformation (including the break from Rome, dissolution/destruction of monasteries, and legalization of English Bible). Henry's presence was rarely to be found illustrating events that did not correspond with the idea of him as a Protestant king. During the seventeenth century, the English held a relatively narrow view of Henry VIII's achievements, at least visually or symbolically, although they might illustrate the same even differently in reaction to contemporary events.

Tudor monarchs utilized royal portraits and engravings extensively.<sup>60</sup> Henry VII, Henry VIII, and each of his children—Edward VI, Mary I, and Elizabeth I—promoted their significance through portraiture. Not only does the monarch dominate each canvas, there is symbolism abound in the background. Everything means something in these portraits. Indeed, what the portraits did not mean was an accurate representation of the monarch. Historians have done most work on the image of Elizabeth. As one historian notes:

The royal portrait did not strive to perform the role of carefully observed presence—to the record the features of the sitter for posterity—but aimed to reflect a perfected emblem of that presence during the monarch's lifetime. Images of Elizabeth acted as idealised

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<sup>60</sup> Kevin Sharpe. *Image Wars: Promoting Kings and Commonwealths in England, 1603-1660* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2010).

symbols of embodied statehood and just, God-given order. In this respect, royal portraits had more in common with images of religious deities, as they needed to be depicted as distinctively monarch-like rather than wholly individualistic.<sup>61</sup>

Margaret Aston argues a similar, symbolic reading of portraits in *The King's Bedpost:*

*Reformation and Iconography in a Tudor Group Portrait.*<sup>62</sup> As we shall see, Aston seeks the circumstances and people involved in creating such royal and public art. Hans Holbein the Younger's 1536 portrait of Henry VIII is the most famous. Henry dominates this canvas, with a dominant pose and a sword. Henry embodies the powerful monarch.



*Section of the woodcut, title-page of "The Great Bible" published in 1539.*

Symbolism can be found not only in large, expensive portraits, but also in woodcuts found in books and printed ephemera. While portraits were meant more for upper classes, woodcuts—images were often included in inexpensive booklets and potentially viewed by a much larger group. Henry VIII and his councilors promoted a positive image of the monarch and the Henrician Reformation through a variety of woodcuts. The most important example of this is the title-page of *The Great Bible*, published in 1539. It is surmounted by Henry VIII handing the English Bible to the religious leaders. This Bible was installed in all parish churches throughout

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<sup>61</sup> Tarnya Cooper, "Queen Elizabeth's Public Face," *History Today* 53 (2003): 38-41.

<sup>62</sup> Margaret Aston, *The King's Bedpost: Reformation and Iconography in a Tudor Group Portrait* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), xi.

England.<sup>63</sup> Both portraits and woodcuts were extremely important to the lasting image of the Henrician Reformation throughout the Stuart Era.



*“King Edward VI and the Pope” by unknown author in 1570? Obtained through National Portrait Gallery, London.*

After his death, the meaning of Henry VIII’s Reformation started to be shaped through images, such as “King Edward VI and the Pope”—an oil painting by an unknown artist painted sometime around 1570. The painting depicts Henry VIII on his death bed. Henry lies on a large bed that curiously has a naked woman on the leg of the bed. Pillows surround Henry’s body forming a sort of throne around him. Henry points towards his son and heir, Edward VI. Edward, just a boy, sits on a throne made of gold just under England’s coat of arms and has the scepter in his hand. Edward’s throne smashes the pope with the help of a book that states, “The word of the Lord endureth forever.” The pope is being smashed by the power of both the king and God. Monks and priests run away from the pope in hopes they too will not be smashed. Edward Seymour, the first duke of Somerset and protector of Edward VI, stands next to his

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<sup>63</sup> Tatiana C. String, “Henry VIII’s Illuminated ‘Great Bible’,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 59 (1996): 315-324.

nephew, the king. Beside him sits the rest of Edward VI's council, all waiting to hear what the king has to say. Outside the window, the king's men burn and destroy images, representing the fall of the Catholic Church and its idolatry.<sup>64</sup>

"King Edward VI and the Pope" was painted to honor the Henrician and Edwardian Reformations. After the resurrection of Catholicism during Mary I's reign, Protestants glorified both Henry VIII and Edward VI for their work. Henry, who started the Reformation with his break from the Roman Catholic Church in 1533, points to his son Edward, symbolizing that Henry passes on the Reformation to his son. The Elizabethans would have especially honored Edward because he was a truly a Protestant king, unlike his father who still advocated Catholic practices until his death. The king and the word of God, represented by the book with writing on it, smash the pope. It is both a heavenly and earthly destruction of the pope. The monarch and God are inseparable, especially in the Anglican Church where the monarch is the head of the Church. The destruction of images outside of the bedroom shows the Elizabethan support for this as well. This painting shows the Elizabethans shaping the Henrician Reformation as a beginning of further Reformation to come under Edward VI. They may not have seen it this way without the very Catholic Marian Counter-Reformation and the fact that Elizabeth, Henry's daughter, was in power. The events of the Elizabethan era shaped how contemporaries viewed the past.

Although paintings provide an idea of what people were thinking about past events, they were primarily available for viewing only to the elite and those who had access to the elite's homes. More people viewed woodcuts, which were included in printed material, and printed

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<sup>64</sup> This reading relies heavily on Margaret Ashton, *The King's Bedpost: Reformation and Iconography in a Tudor Group Portrait* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

material in this time became very popular.<sup>65</sup> While some books were quite expensive, others that were cheaper and available to the vast majority of people. Some of the printed material focused on King Henry VIII's reign and his Reformation. There are a number of plays, chapbooks, and histories written about Henry himself. Information on the Henrician Reformation, though, tends to be included in histories and religious texts. While the histories were still largely available to only the upper classes, they were more widely seen than the portraits and other paintings only present in elite's homes. The illustrations included in these histories provide again an idea of what the people remembered most from the Henrician Reformation.



The History of the Defenders of the Catholique Faith by Christopher Lever (1627).

Christopher Lever's *The History of the Defenders of the Catholique Faith*, published in 1627, a complete history of the Church of England from Henry VIII to the current monarch Charles I, features each of the monarchs from Henry to Charles on its title-page. Each monarch is connected to an important religious event related to their reign. Edward VI has iconoclasm,

<sup>65</sup> Roger Chartier, "Reading Matter and 'Popular' Reading: From the Renaissance to the Seventeenth Century," in *A History of Reading in the West* ed. Guglielmo Cavallo and Roger Chartier (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999).



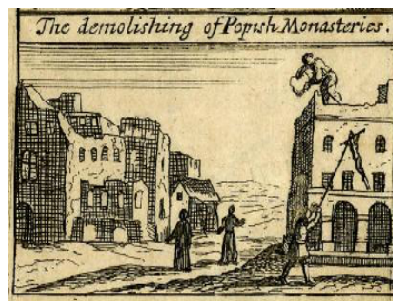
Mary I has the Smithfield burnings, Elizabeth I has the defeat of the Spanish armada, James I has the reinstitution of the bishops, and Charles I has an army ready to defend European Protestants. At the top, though, is an image of Henry VIII sitting on a throne. At his feet, being smashed by the throne is the pope. Henry hands the English Bible to the men standing on his right side, the religious men, which include Archbishop Thomas Cranmer. On Henry's left side, Roman Catholic clergy members wave their hands in the air and look distressed at Henry's actions. The image of Henry closely resembles the image of him included in the 1539 edition of *The Great Bible*. The cover of *The History of the Defenders of the Catholique Faith* remembers Henry as beginning the English Reformation, and the one who defeated papal authority and gave the vernacular Bible to the English people.



*Title-Page of Burnet's History of the Reformation of the Church of England (1679).*

The title page of Burnet's *History of the Reformation of the Church of England*, the first of three volumes on this subject published in 1679, portrays Henry in a similar way. The illustration on the title-page features both Henry VIII and Thomas Cranmer, archbishop of Canterbury. Henry, in a pose reminiscent of Hans Holbein's portrait, stands on top of the papal

tiara, representing the dominance of Henry over Rome. Thomas Cranmer, on the opposite side, stands on top of a rosary and papal decrees. The archbishop also holds the English Bible in his hand. In the background, the destruction of the monasteries is taking place. On Henry's side of the illustration, the actual destruction takes place. Not only is the destruction of the monasteries occurring, but also the destruction of superstition. On Cranmer's side, men build up the true church. A similar scene takes place under both Henry's and Cranmer's feet. It is interesting that Cranmer stomps on the rosary and papal decrees instead of Henry. I believe that this shows that people in the seventeenth century recognized Henry was not responsible for destroying Catholic practices and beliefs. Instead, it was the work of people like Thomas Cranmer, who were building up the "true church;" the same way the men were building up the church on Cranmer's side of the illustration.



*From The History of the Life, Victorious Reign, and Death of King Henry VIII (1682).*

*The History of the Life, Victorious Reign, and Death of King Henry VIII (1682)* also portrays the Henrician Reformation. This book's engraving illustrate the emperor bowing to Henry VIII, the English army defeating the Scots, Henry's marriage to Anne Boleyn, Anne Boleyn's execution, and the besiege of Bulloign. The most important of these illustrations for our purpose, though, is the demolishing of popish monasteries—the only image related to the Henrician Reformation. People remembered Henry for this and not for a more unfavorable event related to the Henrician Reformation, such as the burnings of martyrs, which are more commonly

associated with Mary I as seen in the cover of *The History of the Defenders of the Catholique Faith*.

While seventeenth-century illustrations do not hesitate to associate Henry VIII with events from the Reformation like the break from Rome, dissolution/destruction of the monasteries, and the legalization of the English Bible, they do hesitate to associate him with events that do not align with the idea of Henry as a perfect Protestant King. Following the break from Rome in 1533, Henry and his council began taking actions to separate the Church of England from the Roman Catholic Church. A prime example includes the iconoclasm that took place during the dissolution of the monasteries between 1536 and 1539. Under Henry VIII's reign, and even more so under subsequent reigns, iconoclasm began taking place to "purify" the true religion.<sup>66</sup> Henry's policies against images were so intense at this time some of his subjects began to call him a Lollard.<sup>67</sup> The reform did not last long. Henry VIII retreated from iconoclasm and other extreme Protestant practices in the 1540s. Once Henry began to retreat back to Catholic practices, many of the evangelicals went abroad and fled for fear of persecution.<sup>68</sup> Many stayed in England, though, and were imprisoned or murdered for their beliefs. Several of these martyrs (or heretics depending on which side you are on) are included in John Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*.

The stories of Protestant martyrs during the Henrician Reformation conflict with the image of Henry as a good Protestant king. Yet, however Lutheran or even Calvinist the Church of England might be in the mid-1500s, as seen by the Act of Ten Articles in 1536, it had moved back to a much more traditional (Catholic) belief structure by the time of the Act of the Six

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<sup>66</sup> Margaret Aston, "Iconoclasm in England: Official and Clandestine," in ed. Peter Marshall's *The Impact of the English Reformation: 1500-1640*, New York: St. Martin's Press (1997),

<sup>67</sup> Aston, "Iconoclasm in England: Official and Clandestine," 177.

<sup>68</sup> Aston, "Iconoclasm in England: Official and Clandestine," 181.

Articles in 1539. Many new-found Protestants objected to the latter and suffered persecution under Henry in his last years. Anne Askew, an English gentry-woman, was burned at the stake on July 14, 1546 for disagreeing with the doctrine of transubstantiation—the belief the Eucharist is the actual body and blood of Christ, not just a representation of them.<sup>69</sup>

Transubstantiation was an explosive doctrinal issue in 1540s England. Henry VIII saw repressing those who defied the real presence as a top priority.<sup>70</sup> In both the royal proclamation of 1538 and the Act of Six Articles in 1539, real presence was stated as an official view of the Anglican Church; disagreeing with transubstantiation was considered heresy.<sup>71</sup> Askew, who had closely studied the Gospels and book of Acts, believed the Eucharist was only a representation of Jesus' body—not his actual body.<sup>72</sup> Askew stated Catholics had misinterpreted Jesus when he said the bread was his body and the wine his blood, the same way the Jewish people in the Gospel of John misinterpreted Jesus when he said he would destroy the temple and raise it in three days.<sup>73</sup> Jesus did not mean he would actually destroy the temple of Jerusalem, but instead he used the word “temple” as a symbol for himself. Askew argued Jesus did the same thing with the bread and wine; it was simply a symbol.

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<sup>69</sup> Theresa D. Kemp, “Translating (Anne) Askew: The Textual Remains of a Sixteenth-Century Heretic and Saint,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 52, no. 4 (Winter 1999), 1021.

<sup>70</sup> Elizabeth Malson-Huddle, “Anne Askew and the Controversy over the Real Presence,” *SEL Studies in English Literature 1500-1900* 50, no. 1 (Winter 2010), 3-4.

<sup>71</sup> Interestingly, the doctrine was not called ‘transubstantiation’ following the break with Rome in an effort to break away from papist terms. Instead, the host is “the very bodye of Christ reallye.” Malson-Huddle, 4.

<sup>72</sup> Malson-Huddle discusses the problem Henry VIII faced with lay people reading the Bible: “After charging every parish church to provide the Great Bible in 1541, Henry VIII attempted to reduce the threat of the laity interpreting scriptures independently by restricting access to reading the English Bible in 1543 with the Act for the Advancement of True Religion. Under this act, all English citizens were forbidden to read the Bible with the exception of nobles and gentry, who were charged to read it privately; only the clergy were allowed to read the English Bible in public.” Malson-Huddle, 11.

<sup>73</sup> Malson-Huddle, 12.

Askew did not convince others of her theory, though. Instead, she was arrested, tortured—the first woman to have been tortured at the Tower of London—and burned at the stake at Smithfield with three other Protestant heretics. Askew’s death did not bring an end to her fight, though. Askew made an effort to write down all of her thoughts and struggles in *Examinations*, which was given to John Bale, an influential, exiled reformer, prior to her death.<sup>74</sup> Bale edited and published Askew’s work within a few months of her death; he also added his own commentary and an account of her death.<sup>75</sup> Theresa Kemp argues, “The power of the reported news is double-edged in its ability to sway people, and [Anne Askew] particularly fear[ed] being misquoted by her enemies.”<sup>76</sup> Askew consistently corrected her interrogators’ writing on Askew’s beliefs and wrote *Examinations* to make sure her beliefs were not distorted. She knew that it was her own experiences that would help to change other’s beliefs. As a result, Askew’s opinions and story were passed on and republished. *Examinations* was also quoted in other influential works, such as Foxe’s *Book of Martyrs*. Askew’s struggle to make sure the truth about her beliefs was recorded allowed her to be remembered as a martyr far after her death and into the seventeenth century.

Askew’s martyrdom continued to be published into the seventeenth century. Her story is not only found in John Bale’s edition of *Examinations*, but also in popular ballads from the time at multiple editions of John Foxe’s *Book of Martyrs*. Foxe’s work in particular contains several different woodcut versions of Askew’s burning. The 1641 and 1684 versions of *Book of Martyrs* feature Anne Askew woodcuts that are based off the original woodcut of Askew’s burning

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<sup>74</sup> Kemp, 1042.

<sup>75</sup> Kemp, 1028.

<sup>76</sup> Kemp, 1042.

included in Robert Crowley's *Confutation of Nicholas Shaxton*, published in 1548.<sup>77</sup> The two woodcuts share some similarities in layout and format, but there are many significant differences between the two. The differences between the two woodcuts of Anne Askew's martyrdom included in editions of Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* published during the seventeenth century shows how contemporary events shaped the way Stuart England looked differently at Henrician Reformation events.

Both woodcuts have a number of similarities, since they are both based off the original woodcut in Rowley's work. The woodcuts both take place at Smithfield. The same church is present in each woodcut and the set up of the burning is very similar—a circle of people surrounding the convicted at the stakes. In both, Anne Askew is about to be burned with three other martyrs: John Lacels, John Adams, and Nicolas Belenian. Bishop Saxton stands at his pulpit preaching to the heretics and giving them one last chance to repent. Both have the council looking on. The council includes the lord chamberlain and others of the king's counselors, the lord mayor, and the city's aldermen.<sup>78</sup> The men are seated upon a "Substancyall Stage," which had been constructed the day before specifically for Askew's burning.<sup>79</sup> Therese Kemp writes that the council was elevated to show the control of the state in the situation: "Elevated above both the spectacle of martyrdom and the masses of onlookers below the stage, this group of officials visually exemplifies the government's power."<sup>80</sup> It is important for the government officials to dominate the situation so that it is obvious that all people present at the burning realize the power of the state. In the original woodcut of the scene, and the 1641 and 1684 versions in Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, the council is much larger than everyone else present. Even

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<sup>77</sup> Kemp, 1033.

<sup>78</sup> Kemp, 1026.

<sup>79</sup> Kemp, 1026.

<sup>80</sup> Kemp, 1027.

though the council sits far behind both the martyrs and the crowd, they are larger than both groups of people. The state dominates the woodcut the same way it dominates people's life. Despite the number of similarities between the two woodcuts, the differences explain how each time thought differently of the past.



From John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments of Matters Most Special and Memorable, Happening in the Church with an Universal History of the Same*, London: Company of Stationers, 1641. Obtained through Early English Books Online (EEBO).

The woodcut above from Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* 1641 edition depicts Askew's burning as a very public event. The large crowd overwhelms the soldiers who are trying to keep them in line; the scene looks like a mob. Throughout the woodcut, soldiers on horses lose control of the situation. In the bottom left corner, the soldier's horse tramples a bystander. Individuals push and shove on a spectator stand in the bottom right corner resulting in some people being pushed off completely. The council on the stage in the background does not seem to be paying attention to the scene unfolding in front of them. Instead, they look at one another. The scene here is one of chaos. The actual burning of Anne Askew was unlikely as chaotic as depicted here. The artist of this woodcut lived in a world that was filled with riots and mobs. This woodcut was illustrated in the year before the English Civil War. Mobs were present throughout England and

many people saw them as a common occurrence.<sup>81</sup> It makes sense then that the people of this time would assume that the past was like this. The contemporary events were greatly influencing the way people viewed the past.



*From John Foxe's Acts and Monuments of Matters Most Special and Memorable, Happening in the Church with an Universal History of the Same, London: Company of Stationers, 1684. Obtained through Early English Books Online (EEBO).*

Unlike the 1641 version of the burning, the 1684 version is much more orderly. England in 1684 was a much different place than England in 1641. In the 1684 woodcut illustration of Anne Askew's martyrdom, the crowd stands still. Everyone pays close attention to what is happening. The soldiers are in control of the situation. Not only are they standing tall and sitting calmly on their horses on the outskirts of the crowd, but they also stand right behind the crowd, forcing it into a perfect oval shape. The council, which is still proportionally larger than it should be, watches attentively. Although England in 1641 was full of civil unrest, England in 1684 a much more orderly society. The Civil War was over and Charles II had been reinstated king. In the time between the two events, though, the army had been in control of the country.

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<sup>81</sup> Robert Bucholz and Newton Key, *Early Modern England, 1485-1714* (Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 248-252.



People were accustomed to seeing the army in control.<sup>82</sup> As a result, contemporaries viewed the past as being the same way, just as they had in 1641.

Contemporary events play a large role in shaping the way past events are viewed during that time. In the over 100 years since Henry VIII's death, the perception of his reformation and the events that took place during it were looked at differently as a result of the events that were happening during the time. The difference in views is seen especially in images of the time, whether it be in high art (paintings) or popular art (woodcuts). Paintings, such as "Edward VI and the Pope," show that current events shaped the way people viewed the past. Although this painting was not from the Stuart era, it shows how people began to look back to the importance of the Henrician Reformation as soon as the Elizabethan reign. People looked very highly on the reformation because of events that were fresh in the contemporaries' minds (the Marian Counter Reformation). This can also be seen in popular art with woodcuts such as the burning of Anne Askew in the 1641 and 1684 editions of John Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*. Although the two woodcuts are quite similar, there are several differences that are a result of the time period. People project their own time on the past all of the time. The seventeenth-century Englishmen are no different when dealing with the Henrician Reformation.

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<sup>82</sup> Bucholz and Key, 299-314

## Conclusion

The image of Henry VIII and his Reformation in seventeenth-century print resembles the image today. The long histories of Henry VIII tell stories very similar to the ones still told by historians today when discussing him. The chapbooks present a different character than the one of today. Even so, these chapbooks portray Henry VIII as someone worth being interested in. This fascination with Henry VIII has continued on to the present day in entertainment such as the popular book and movie *The Other Boleyn Girl* and the popular television show *The Tudors*. People still look to Henry VIII and his reign for entertainment.

In order to strengthen the argument, it would be necessary to include histories by Catholics, such as Nicholas Harpsfield's *A Treatise on the Pretended Divorce between Henry VIII and Catharine of Aragon* (1878). It is also difficult to understand just what the lowest people thought of Henry VIII since they could not read. This argument could be strengthened by investigating oral culture's role on the view of Henry VIII. This would not only determine the importance of oral culture in telling history, but also would show what the lowest classes thought of Henry VIII. This research shows how different groups of people use and shape the past for future generations through print, but it would be interesting to know how they do the same through oral tradition.

The seventeenth century was fascinated by Henry VIII and the Henrician Reformation. High literature loved to look at the facts of Henry's reign. By studying their interpretations of the break from Rome, the dissolution of the monasteries, and the burning of Anne Askew, we have gained a clear picture of the view readers had of Henry VIII. He was the good leader pushed to action by both personal reasons and divine inspiration. The low literature of the period does not directly talk about Henry's role in the Henrician Reformation, but it does include many

stories of Henry VIII as a good king who liked to interact with those outside of court. Henry's reign is portrayed as a wonderful and glorious time. In ballads about the Henrician Reformation, such as *The Ballad of Anne Askew*, Henry is not associated with the negatives. This is clear in the printed images from the time as well, which focus on the break from Rome, dissolution of the monasteries, and legalization of the English Bible. Henry is not associated with negative events from his reign that conflict with the Stuart view of Henry, such as the burning of Anne Askew. The image of Henry VIII in seventeenth century England is a positive one secured and promoted through print culture.

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